



“Sweet Sleep”

2006 Flameworked glass and mixed media. 3.25”h X 5”w X 4”d.

This girl seems to have found the limits of her appetite, which suggests gorging and overindulgence. Both “Sweet Sleep” and “Reliquary for my Everyday” offer ideas that are very sensual in a peculiar relationship with nature. Could this be the impulsiveness of youth, involved with gluttonous consumption? The girl’s stained face and soiled dress add drama to this lush setting. The sculpture, designed to be a wall mount, is an innovative approach to displaying what Carmen calls a “diminutive sculpture.”

ing was considered the bastard stepchild of glassblowing, and the brunt of jokes by blowers, because they considered the resulting work kitsch. Now, when discussing flameworking’s once negative reputation with students, we show that one shouldn’t blame a process for producing insignificant work.

Flameworking has the power to shock our preconceived notions about glass with its uncanny ability, similar to welding, to be fabricated while hot. Hot bit by hot bit, this process is responsible for attracting a critical eye celebrating edgy artwork, on the verge of affecting the broader American art landscape.

An increasing number of college glass art programs are offering flameworking instruction. This is responsible for changing the glass art landscape with thought-provoking efforts nurtured by people with formal art backgrounds. It is interesting that, by “going to college,” flameworking is adding fine art credibility to the

Appreciation for Carmen Lozar

Text by Paul Stankard
Photos by Victoria Perelet

The birth of the Studio Glass Movement in the early ’60s gave growing numbers of creative people access to hot glass in an art school environment. Over the last 40-plus years, these graduates, energized with BFA and MFA degrees, have collided with the history of glass in an unparalleled way. One result of this studio glass experience has been to nurture growth in the novelty craft of flameworking. When I travel in

glass art circles and witness this growth, it’s easy to understand how flameworking has the opportunity to influence the future of glass art.

It was fun to hear Bill Gudenrath, artist adviser of the Corning Museum Studio School, when I was teaching there a few years ago, suggest that flameworking is responsible for both the smallest and largest examples of hand-worked hot glass. It wasn’t too long ago that flamework-



“Flutter”

2008. Flameworked glass and metal.
14”h x 5” circle diameter.

Flutter, the largest of the pieces, poetically alludes to feelings of butterflies in the stomach. The mechanism hanging under the base invites the viewer to activate the wings.

process. On both sides of this community (artists and craftspeople), there are courageous people encouraging one another to reach higher and to be bolder. However, the academic side (with its fine art tradition) has the stronger strategy, as its work speaks to the future, while often building on the past.

Artists talk among themselves about who's making interesting art, so, when Robert Mickelson enthusiastically commented on Carmen Lozar's flameworked glass, I was eager to seek out her work. When experiencing Carmen's glass, I was pleasantly surprised, and rewarded with a peculiar point of view that articulates a feminine esthetic. Lozar represents a new generation of talented people who are finding innovative ways to be creative in glass. Trained as a sculptor with an MFA degree, she brings a fine arts expectation to her small-scale sculpture. Carmen's ideas transcend her glassworking skill and evidence a personal creative vocabulary.

Carmen's flameworked glass exemplifies a new future for the process, as her small-scale sculptures ascend into the fine arts realm. In the classroom, I show slides and discuss her sculptures. I talk about her representing a new generation of young people bringing discipline and professional responsibilities to a committed art-making career. I point out Carmen's use of found objects, combined with borosilicate glass and technical problem-solving, as her way of creating work that's original. It's about being innovative and giving personal ideas fresh visibility. We discuss the advantage of borosilicate glass in Carmen's art and how it balances tension and appeal emotionally, grabbing the viewer.

Carmen's small vignettes speak of the sensual side of nature and suggest a peculiar, excessive consumption. When I think of Carmen's flameworked glass in the context of the 16th- and 17th-century French Nevers figurine tradition, I see this tradition being reinvigorated after a long sleep, and believe the best is yet to come.

When viewing Carmen's installations, I'm reminded of the dramatic Marie Antoinette diorama of 1790 displayed in the Corning Museum of Glass, and enjoy the visual and intellectual connection between her work and the historical.



“Girl Honey”

2005. Flameworked glass and mixed media. 7”h X 3.5”w X 4”d.

The Honey Girl takes gluttonous eating to the extreme. Like “Sweet Sleep” and “Reliquary for my Everyday,” the figures are placed in situations suggesting the abundance of a surreal harvest. What makes “Girl Honey” bizarre is the absence of any threat from honeybees, despite the presence of a honeycomb. The one distraction that I find in “Girl Honey” is the novelty of having the honeycomb loop around the tree branch. This mechanical connection is a visual oddity that takes focus away from the magic of the piece.



“Dress Set”

2007. Flameworked glass and metal. 7.5”h x 12”w x 4”d.

Carmen’s invisible skill in suggesting windswept cloths (apparently in preparation for an out of town weekend—note the bathing suit) is a small and delightful counterpoint to renowned artist Karen La Monte’s life-size dresses cast in glass. Carmen evidences a feminine esthetic, growing with artistic authority.

It will be interesting to see if Carmen defines her artistic future in a way that continues to build on the French tradition or goes on to explore new avenues.

The “what am I looking at” question in Carmen’s glass (see the accompanying illustration entitled *Sweet Sleep*) from the strange relationship between the young ladies and nature makes the work successful. By setting up a surreal world of tension through consumption, Carmen’s ideas have triggered strange childhood memories of being caught sneaking onto a neighbor’s property and mindlessly gorging myself on grapes from his prized grapevines.

A series combining glass and found objects entitled “Toys” engages the viewer with a playful invitation to turn gears and be surprised. When twisting a lipstick holder slowly, one dispenses an ascending nude; in another object, while turning the mechanism, one sees anticipated doom unfolding on an unsuspecting worm coming out of a hole, as a perched bird simultaneously drops down to snag it.

I marvel at Carmen’s adventurous spirit, and how compatible the flameworking process is with her creative vision. Carmen’s training, commitment and disciplined work ethic support her group exhibitions and solo exhibits. She is now represented by the prestigious Marx Saunders Gallery in Chicago, where her artwork is finding a growing audience. During SOFA 2008 in New York City this year, I overheard Bonnie Marx, director of the Marx Saunders Gallery, say to a group of collectors, “Lozar’s diminutive, realistic dioramas provoke emotional flashbacks that are worthy of serious consideration.”

Recently I had a chance to talk to Carmen at Salem Community College, when she was the featured artist and keynote speaker for the International Flameworking Conference. I took pride in knowing that young people like her are setting the new standards and will make glass history with this craft.

In addition to being a studio artist, Carmen maintains an active schedule, teaching at Illinois Wesleyan University, giving lectures and demonstrating her

flameworking techniques to a growing number of college-level glass-art majors. Carmen maintains a studio with her accomplished husband, glass artist Matt Urban. Together, they represent the next wave of talented artists gaining visibility on the national glass scene.

Publisher’s notes:

Glass artist Paul Stankard, in his recently published book, *No Green Berries or Leaves: The Creative Journey of an Artist in Glass*, writes about his challenges associated with a successful career as a flameworker (www.mwpubco.com). Paul is a featured writer for *Glass Line* magazine with a series that celebrates excellence in flameworked glass art.



“Reliquary for my Everyday III”

2007. (garden). Flameworked and blown glass. 11.5”H x 8” circle diameter

The fertility of Carmen Lozar’s garden is evidenced by a young girl sitting and eating lush tomatoes, oblivious to her surroundings. This innovative approach to flameworking creates an ambiguous environment that asks questions; about hunger, self-pity, or any number of emotions. Having an elaborate colored-glass environment, supported by a delicate, hollow-footed dome is a visual accomplishment that only flamework could do.